

Here are some of the ideas on encouraging active play and curiosity in children shared by Marge Kennedy in **Work & Family Life** (April 2009)...

- **Let kids handle anything they can safely handle.** Children need to touch things that fill their environment. For example, climbing a tree or walking through a mud puddle should not be something a child wonders about but never gets to experience. Given the opportunity, few children can resist taking something apart to see how it works or mixing various ingredients just to see what might happen.

- **Show your sense of wonder.** Observe the world around you and you'll encourage your children to do the same. Invite a creative response by asking questions such as: "What do you think is inside?" or "Let's see how it works." or "What if you turned it on that side?"

- **Provide tools to stimulate curiosity.** A tape measure can get a young child wondering how long things are. A magnifying glass, microscope, or telescope can offer a closer look. And, of course, books are primary tools.

- **Note connections.** Make comparisons. Talk about how things relate and interrelate. For example, "How is a guitar like a violin? How is it different?"

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Our mission is to promote family involvement by providing information on topics of interest in early childhood education to the parent as the child's first and most important teacher.

# Encouraging Active Play



Sponsored by Seminole State College, the  
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Real play — play that is initiated and directed by children and that bubbles up from within the child rather than being imposed by adults — has largely disappeared from the landscape of childhood in the United States. There are many reasons for this, such as the long hours spent in front of screens each day or in activities organized by adults. In addition, preschools and kindergartens that used to foster meaningful play and exploration often spend long hours on adult-led instruction instead. All of these are the outer manifestations of something deeper — a modern mindset that does not value play. \*

### Why Play?

Encouraging active play and participation in sports is vital for our children because many children don't know how to play.

Why? There are fewer opportunities for active play than in the past – fewer urban play spaces, less school time devoted to play and sport, fewer playmates at home to play with. Families and extended families are smaller now. This contributes to the sedentary lifestyle of young people and the problems, such as obesity, that may accompany it.

\*Childcare Information Exchange, March, 2009, Joan Almon, [The Fear of Play](#).

It's not facts, but the curiosity and discovery from play through which children learn. Children begin to develop the ability for mental representation between the ages of one and two. Pretend play is an important part of a child's development especially through to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Play helps the child be able to take another person's perspective and develops abstract thinking in later years. It has been found that even animals, such as puppies, dolphins, and birds, benefit from acts of play.

### Benefits of Play

- Play involves multiple parts of the brain including language, cognition, emotion, and sensori-motor actions.
- Play gives opportunities for learning experiences in which there are no real mistakes, just practice, practice, practice.
- Children's dramatic play is repetitious, which the brain needs for developing.
- During dramatic play, children plan together, negotiate, solve problems and seek common goals.
- Play helps children deal with trauma in their lives.
- The ability to read, to comprehend the written word, is closely connected to the ability to engage in dramatic play. The ability to take on a role during dramatic play indicates higher level thinking and it helps the child to represent her world symbolically.

### Tips For Encouraging Active Kids

- Be active yourself and your child will follow your lead. Instead of being a couch potato, make some time to have fun together, such as walking the dog or bicycling.
- Involve your child in daily chores around the house, such as gardening, washing the car and cleaning. Not only do these activities keep everyone physically active, they help the house run smoothly.
- Keep an activities box at home and in the car with balls, frisbee, kite, beach bucket and spade so that you're always prepared.
- Limit TV time. Keep an eye on the amount of time your child spends watching TV or using the computer. Aim for no more than two hours a day and preferably less than 30 minutes a day.

Resource:

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/encouraging\\_kids\\_to\\_be\\_active.html/context/241](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/encouraging_kids_to_be_active.html/context/241))